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Testimonial Dinner for Senator Frank Church - Boise, Idaho

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Governor and Mrs. Andrus, Chester and Mrs. McCloud, Senator and Bethine Church, distinguished guests at the head table and in the audience -- and that includes everyone -- my fellow Democrats, our Republican guests, my fellow Americans all.

This has been an incredible year. This has been an incredible month. This has been an incredible week, and this has been an incredible day. The Watergate Committee is going to continue to lay their facts before the American people. We are tired of the skullduggery, of the snooping, of the dirty politics, and of the violation of our civil rights.

Two former Cabinet officers are under indictment. Three former officials in this Administration and in the Committee to Re-Elect the President -- Mr. Magruder, Mr. LaRue and Mr. Dean have pleaded guilty. Grand juries are in operation in Washington, in New York, and in Los Angeles, trying to get to the bottom of the type of politics which was employed in the campaign last year and for which there was and there is no justification whatsoever.

Ten days ago a Vice President of the United States resigned. And Father Ray, I have deliberately held back giving you recognition until this moment because one of the men who, according to newspaper reports, refused to become involved in a payoff -- was an American business man by the name of Etchiveron, a cousin I understand, of the President of the United Mexican States, also named Etchiveron, and may I say that these Basques are the inheritors of a noble lineage and members of a proud race.

Two weeks ago war broke out in the Middle East. On yesterday the President sent up a message, the details of which we do not know, asking for 2.2 billion dollars -- not just for Israel alone, but also for Cambodia.

Yesterday, at about 8:15 Eastern Standard Time, the President of the United States announced that he had aborted a confrontation because he had called in Senators Ervin and Baker to discuss with them a compromise on these tapes. But he did so against the opposition of one of the outstanding and most honest officials of this government -- the Honorable Archibald Cox, a Special Prosecutor. I can not find fault with what he did with the Senate Committee because I had been advocating for months that the President call down Ervin and Baker and discuss the Watergate tapes and as reasonable men arrive at a reasonable compromise. Furthermore, it was just a few days ago that the action on the part of the Watergate Senate Committee to have access to the tapes was denied by Judge Sirica in the District Court of the District of Columbia. But the Special Prosecutor, Archibald Cox, had taken the matter of the tapes and the notes, and all the memorandum which went with it, also to the courts, and he has been upheld in the District Court and in the Appellate or the Circuit Court.

The President had until midnight last night to arrive at a decision on this matter and when midnight passed and he had not appealed the decision of the Circuit Court, that meant that the issue is still before the courts where it should be. He said in his statement last night that he thought the Supreme Court would uphold his position. He may be right, but I don't think so because I think this is a clearcut case of information which must be made available so that the American people will know what has been done because basically a President, a Vice President, a Senator -- are only temporary officers, holding office in an institution which is the permanent factor in the consideration of the affairs of this government, and no man, no matter what his position, is above the law.

I found out tonight that Archibald Cox had been fired by the President of the United States.

Archibald Cox appeared before the Judiciary Committee and he was given certain promises and undertook certain obligations in an independent capacity to undertake the job of Special Prosecutor to get to the bottom of all this hanky-panky which had gone on in the last campaign. It wasn't a case of hidden donations alone; it wasn't a case of using tactics to attack the sex lives of men like Humphrey and Jackson; it wasn't just a case of drawing up a phony "Canuck" letter; it wasn't just a case of an illegal entry into the office of Dr. Fielding in Los Angeles; it wasn't just a case of ITT and Vesco and all those other things; it was a case of those around the President who were interested in one thing only and that was power, and to hell with the cost.

One thing I want to make clear. That insofar as Watergate and all its implications are concerned, the Republican Party as such, insofar as I know, is clean as a whistle. And perhaps one of the reasons for the illegal unnecessary activities which occurred, may lie in the fact that there were no politicians of the Republican Party connected with the Committee to Re-Elect the President. Well, the polls may indicate that we rank either above or below the members of the fourth estate and the used car dealers, but I want to tell you that I am proud to be a politician and as a profession, we have no apologies to offer to anyone. After all, it's the people of Montana who send me to Washington and it's the people of Idaho who elect Cecil Andrus as your Governor. And I don't think you'd vote for any of us if you thought we were double dealers or crooks because our security, our insurance, lies in the fact that you know us, you hire us, you keep us in office or you drag us out of office, and you do it on the basis of first hand knowledge and not on the basis of innuendoes or assumptions.

In the weeks ahead I want to assure you that the Republic stands and will continue to stand. In the weeks ahead the Senate is going to do what it has done

all this year and that is to act constructively, to attend to our business, to keep politics to a minimum, and to make certain that this government of yours and ours functions. After all, there is one thing we must never forget! When we speak of the Government of the United States, we're not speaking of the Senate or the House, or the Executive branch or the Judiciary. We're speaking of you because, after all is said and done, the people of this Nation are the Government of the United States. There will be no more snooping. We don't play politics that way. We recognize that there are limits in the game of politics and in the running of campaigns -- limits which should not be overstepped. There will be no more snooping I say. Your rights will be observed and the Nation will continue to function in spite of the difficulty which confronts us today. Perhaps out of this will come a purification and a cleansing which will be beneficial to the whole country and which will bring about a reordering of our priorities so that we can attend to the needs of our people first, and perhaps out of this will come a closer look at what the political office holders do. Their records will be scanned more carefully, and that is as it should be, and that is as it must be. We're all paying a price at the moment because I think all of us in some degree are responsible for what we have allowed to occur. We've lost our sense of morality, I believe, to a certain degree. We've become too materialistic minded, and maybe a return to the old values and the old virtues might, in my opinion, could stand us in good stead today.

I welcome this opportunity to honor an outstanding American. By way of introduction I should first relate, however, the basis for my appearance here in Boise this evening. In reality, it was a common identification with such a devoted friend, loyal fan, and willing follower of Frank Church of Idaho. It is about him, I think, that the philosopher wrote: "Purity of the heart is to will one thing."

That quotation refers to the special qualities by which certain people in this world are set upon. Qualities that infect the lives of those whose actions here on earth actually do make a difference. Such are the qualities of Frank Church. He is a big man in many ways, and his bigness is reflected in a heart and character to match. Wry, dedication, compassion, hard work to the Senate more than 16 years ago. These were some of the qualities he brought. Tonight we begin the process that will assure his return to the Senate less than two years from now. Returning with him will be the towering humanity and capacity to establish instant rapport with the Americans of every endeavor that have marked all of his years of public service. The wheat rancher in Montana, the potato grower here in Idaho, the iron worker in Pennsylvania, the miner in West Virginia, suburbanite and urban dweller alike -- all are the constituents of Frank Church. He knows it and they do, too, because the record speaks for itself.

But it was with regard to the tragic and unnecessary war in Vietnam perhaps that Frank Church exhibited his keenest perceptive and deepest understanding of America, of her problems and needs and of her position in the world today. Frank Church was aware that 55,000 Americans died in Indochina -- was aware that 303,000 Americans were wounded -- was aware that between 25 and 26,000 of those wounded are paraplegics or quadriplegics today -- and was aware that the war/cost ^{would} around 140 billion dollars to date, but into the middle of the next century the figure would be closer to 425 billion dollars -- and for what? Senator Church recognized early the futile tragedy of that war and appraised quickly its cost, not only in terms of men and money but in the way it diverted the Nation's attention away from the countless priorities here at home, matters that were compelled to stand aside while this nation pursued this tragic involvement abroad.

We honor tonight a man whose interests and contributions extend well beyond the issues of warfare however critical has been their effect. We honor a man who knows about labor, the farmers, the housewife, the city dweller. He knows about health care, the aged -- he is the Chairman of that Committee -- the infirmed. He knows people. In short, we honor a man tonight who has been in the midst of it all, who has recognized that need and suffering do exist and who refuses to accept such matters as they are --national -- even global -- in his perspective and concern. Yet is to return here to Idaho to the heartland of America that I know Frank Church years for most. It was here after all that he launched a career devoted exclusively to helping people. Idaho sent him to the United States Senate to address those problems and he responded magnificently. It says a great deal for this State and it is no wonder that it is back here in Idaho among the people whom he loved so much that the heart of Frank Church has remained. In fighting for a sound and fair farm policy he is fighting the battles of his own people for a tax code that provides for equity for the middle income taxpayer and an employment program that puts Americans on the work rolls and takes them off the welfare rolls. These are the issues to which Frank Church has responded. An implacable foe of wasteful defense spending, he works relentlessly to pare the fat and preserve the muscle in America's military capacity. In the Senate he applies the same effective advocacy in behalf of proposals to alleviate poverty, to meet health needs and to wipe away discrimination. Not long ago when confronted with the question of building schools in foreign lands with United States dollars, it was Senator Church who asked the Democratic Policy Committee why it was that foreign school construction should prevail over schools needed right here in Boise or up in Coeur de'Alene, or over in Kellogg.

And it was also Frank Church who fought to establish democratic procedures within the Democratic Party. To be sure, recognition for his achievements had been ample and duly bestowed on Frank Church. Just as clear, however, is the fact that such accolades were not sought nor would they be. For the man whom we honor tonight is at ease more in the quiet of a forest than at the helm of a Senate committee. He is more comfortable with his family by a bubbling stream than receiving high honor for his political success. In short, Frank Church is a man at peace with himself. It is a secure peace founded upon an indestructible spiritual construction. As we are compelled more and more to experience life through computers, form letters, mass media and other manifestations of this technologically advanced society, Frank Church stands out today as one unwilling to pay lip service to superficial slogans or to remain within the comfortable confines of complacency. Such a brand of leadership, and he has shown it because he is one of my right arms in the Senate, must be preserved. It is essential if we are to answer at all the plea of a young demonstrator whose placard proclaims "I AM A HUMAN BEING -- DO NOT FOLD, BEND, SPINDLE, OR MUTILATE." That is Frank Church -- the man who cares, and a man who contributes so much in public life but who in terms of humility, life style and human understanding remains very much the man who hails from Idaho and is proud to say it.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Nation needs Frank Church, the State of Idaho needs Frank Church, the Senate badly needs Frank Church, and if I may become a little personal, as Majority Leader of the United States Senate, I need Frank Church. ARE YOU GONNA SEND HIM BACK?